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ABSTRACT

This booklet presents child-rearing practices found successful by families of children who are deaf-blind, and includes photographs of deaf-blind children using the techniques. Along with a broad overview of communications theory as it applies to young deaf-blind children, techniques are described for using tactile objects as keys to communication, introducing time concepts with physical calendars and diaries, and other alternate routes to communicative development. A section on eating covers how to introduce solid foods, suggested foods and beverages for beginners, and communicative principles for regular mealtimes. A section on play focuses on including play in a regular social context and is followed by a list of suggested toys with contact information and prices. A section on self-care skills covers teaching methods for dressing, toilet training, and bedtime. A final section on motor development gives exercises for rolling, sitting, crawling, standing, swimming, and walking. General resource information on hearing aids, glasses, and financial support, is also included. (PB)

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ONE STEP AT A TIME:

A Manual for Families of Children with Hearing and Vision Impairments

Funded by
The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps
(TASH)
Technical Assistance Project

Written by Sharon Bolton
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**"The best and the most beautiful things in the world
cannot be seen or even touched.
They must be felt with the heart."**

- Helen Keller

PREFACE

Research has confirmed what we all know from experience--that parents and family play the most important role in a child's development. These early relationships are even more crucial when a child has special needs. The child who is deaf-blind depends on parents and family to make the world accessible and understandable. Although this may seem like an overwhelming task, families have created simple but significant ways of helping a child to learn.

"One Step at a Time" shares tried and true practices from families of children who are deaf-blind. Although written primarily for parents, this manual will help teachers, therapists, and other professionals involved with young deaf-blind children. It offers practical information for helping a child learn basic skills. Suggestions and ideas reflect a respect for the child, parents, and family through these beliefs:

Parents

- ... know their children best.
- ... are a child's earliest and most important teachers.
- ... have the right to take a break from "teaching."

Children who are deaf-blind

- ... need special and specific cues to learn about the world.
- ... learn through active participation in everyday routines.
- ... need to know what is going to happen next.

Learning

- ... begins with communication.
- ... should be enjoyable.
- ... occurs through family interactions.

The importance of family involvement has been recognized by recent federal legislation. Public Law 99-457, Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1986, requires a parent-professional partnership and a family-centered approach in early childhood special education. However, there is still a great need for educational materials which support a child's development within the context of the family. "One Step at a Time" helps fulfill this need.

"One Step at a Time" is a timely and welcome contribution to early childhood special education. It is an exciting product of true collaboration between parents and professionals.

Deborah Chen, Ph.D.
Director of Special Education Services
Foundation for the Junior Blind
Los Angeles, California

To the Families and Friends of Deaf-Blind Children in Washington and Idaho:

When we started this book, we set out to make a manual for parents, but more importantly, *by* parents; because parents **are** the experts. We received so much information from families of deaf-blind children of all ages--the kind of information that you simply can't know unless you live with a child who has a hearing and vision impairment.

We thank all of you for so candidly sharing your lives and your children's lives with us. Know that, without you, this book would never have been possible.

A special thanks to Washington Programs for Deaf-Blind Children and Youths.

This book is dedicated to Breona, Christina, Faleesha, Janessa, John, Joshua, Krista, Matthew, Millie, Riley, and Stephanie.

INTRODUCTION

Most of us learn by using the five senses: hearing, vision, smell, taste, and touch. Hearing and vision are the two senses by which people take in the most information. Therefore, the child with hearing and vision impairments (deaf-blindness) is restricted in the amount of information he can receive.

In order for us to touch, taste, or smell an object, it must come in contact with our body, making these three "near" senses. Hearing and vision, however, are "near" and "distant" senses. For example, we are able to *see* someone coming from off in the distance at the same time we *see* a bee circling around us. We are also able to *hear* the bee buzzing without seeing it. Hearing and vision enable us to explore and identify objects that we might be smelling, touching, or tasting.

The child with deaf-blindness needs to have direct contact with the world in order to interact with it. He has to explore the various parts of an object to create the idea of a "whole." He must "check things out" over and over again in many different settings and situations to develop a mental image of the object. This can be a difficult and sometimes frightening process, causing some children to withdraw. Your child needs someone to interpret the world. Contrary to what you might think, there is no one more qualified to do this than you.

In order for you to begin interpreting for your child, it is important to know how much hearing and vision he has and how he uses it. Each child is unique. His hearing loss may be mild, moderate, or severe. He may be totally blind, able to perceive light and shapes, or able to use his vision to identify people, toys, and other objects. Your ophthalmologist and audiologist can explain the degrees of loss he has. Remember to ask questions of your doctors. As time passes you will know best what your child can hear and see.

Your child will learn about the world only when his senses are stimulated. For most of us, sensory stimulation happens all day every day. You need to make the world stimulating for your child too.

The aim of this book is to help you interpret the world to your child, one step at a time.

In the interest of non-sexist terminology and for ease of the reader, we decided to alternate the use of "he" or "she," and "him" or "her" when referring to a child.

COMMUNICATION

Each child is an individual, therefore, together with your child, you will develop your own system of communication. Initially your child will bond with you for comfort, nourishment, and warmth. Then he will begin to participate with you in loving exchanges of hugs, kisses, and tickles. The games you play will become familiar to him and enrich your relationship. The body contact and loving exchanges will become part of a greeting ritual. Your child will anticipate these activities when spending time with you and begin to recognize you by these rituals and exchanges.



Josh and his dad play with movement.



The process of bonding may take longer for children with deaf-blindness. This is due to the incomplete and chaotic world they live in. A child with deaf-blindness may not be able to see or hear an adult approaching and a greeting touch will startle him. It then takes the child a few seconds to figure out who is there and if this is a "safe" person. Your child will learn your smell and associate the games you use to greet him to figure out who you are. These games are very important to the bonding process and will lead to a system of communication as your child grows older. The process of bonding teaches early communication skills of turn-taking: how to wait for a response and what to do next.

At the start of every conversation with your child you need to announce yourself by using your own identification signal. This may be an object, such as a piece of jewelry you always wear; a gesture, like patting your child's head; or a movement such as bouncing or swinging. These signals will be developed naturally by the people interacting with him. By always announcing yourself to your child in the same way, he will learn to recognize you. Other significant people in your child's life should also announce themselves with their own identification signal.



John feels his teacher's bracelet, thinks about who it is and smiles when he knows it's his teacher.

Conversations with your child will involve the two of you participating through the process of taking turns. Initially you will use games. (An example of a game you can play is Pat-A-Cake.) You need to hold your child close to you to support her body and provide her with a feeling of security. You will soon know which games she enjoys and which ones comfort her. When you stop playing a game she will let you know that she wants to continue by fussing, smiling, or moving. For some children it will take time to understand what is expected of them, so wait for at least fifteen seconds for a reply.

This is the beginning of turn taking. Your child is learning how to pay attention and how to take a turn. Remember that a child with deaf-blindness learns through repetition and needs to be shown what to do. At this stage your child will let you know that she wants the game to continue. Some of these cues may not be obvious in the beginning. When you see a cue, praise her for playing with you and letting you know what she wants. Your child is communicating with you.



Stephanie and her friend get to know each other by taking turns.



As your child gets older you will want to start teaching natural gestures. Do this by pairing gestures with favorite movements or toys. These gestures will come from the actions she is performing. Examples of these are the act of *throwing* for **ball**, or *hugging herself* for **hug**. Eventually, the gestures may be replaced with formal signs, finger spelling, or a picture board, depending on your child's skills.



Millie asks for the ball by pushing it.



Millie plays with the ball when given it.

The first formal signs your child will use are those that represent an activity. Examples of these are: **eat** - *touching the mouth*, **walk** - *moving hands up and down in a stepping motion*, or **brushing teeth** - *moving index finger up and down by the mouth*. Many children will continue to use gestures that have worked for them, before using a formal sign.

Formal signs often require the ability to do small finger movements and a young child may not have the fine motor skills for signing. The totally blind child may need a clue on her body for where the sign should be used. An example of this would be to have your child pat her legs before making the sign for **walk** - *moving hands up and down in a stepping motion*. She may take you to the kitchen and point at the cookie jar rather than make the sign for **cookie**. This is a clearer, faster, and easier way to communicate. Be sure everyone who has an opportunity to communicate with your child knows what her gestures represent.



Krista and her mom get the fixins for chocolate milk.

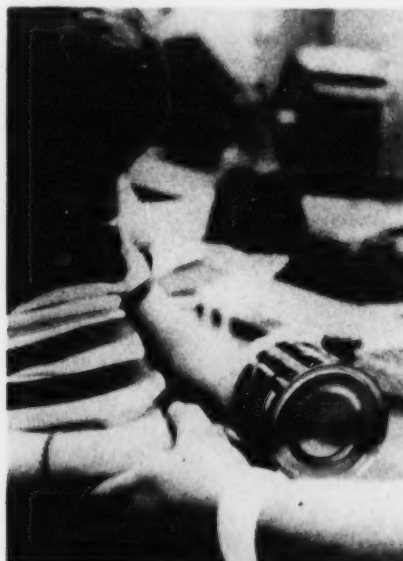


Krista helps every step of the way.

To help your child expand vocabulary and learn new language concepts, first provide experiences with the concepts. For example, to teach the concept of **up**, *lift him up or put him up on the couch*; to teach the concept of **in**, *put him in his stroller, in the bathtub, or in his bed*. After he understands how the concept works in relation to his own body, use the concept with objects. To teach **up** with objects, *have him place dishes up on the counter, pick up his toys to put them away, or put his toothbrush up on the counter*. To teach **in** with objects, *have him put the pans back in the cupboard, put the clothes in the dryer, or put toys in the toy box*. Your child will need lots of repetition of these experiences in a variety of settings for him to truly learn new concepts.



John's teacher gestures *in*.



John finds the can.



John puts the pop bead *in*.

Another way of helping your child learn new words is by using "calendars and diaries." In a calendar, objects are used to represent events in the order they will occur in the child's day. Your child will already know what some objects represent. **Bib** indicates that it is *time to eat* and **coat** means *going outside*. An **outing** to the store may be represented by the *car keys*, **bath** by a *washcloth*, and **playtime** by a *favorite toy*. At the beginning of each day show the objects in the order that the events will take place. Show the objects again just before each event to let him know what is going to happen next. You also can pair a gesture with each object to give a name to the activity.



John uses his calendar to figure out what is next.

New experiences can be frightening for a child because he may not understand what is happening. A calendar will become a schedule, giving you a way of explaining time concepts and letting your child know when he will be participating in a new experience.

A diary, also referred to as a "Talk About it Book," acts as a record of memories. Events in your child's day can be represented by objects. Examples of objects that can be used are a **napkin** - *representing a restaurant*, **sand** - *representing the beach*, or a **button from grandma's button jar** - *representing a trip to grandma's house*.

You can make a diary by using a photo album. Collect flat objects that represent activities your child has taken part in. Insert the object representing each event in the photo album. Showing his diary to others gives your child a way of sharing his experiences. If your child has enough sight to see line drawings you can draw pictures with him that represent the activities. (Use a dark felt tip pen to make the drawings easily visible.)

The following is an example of an actual child's "Talk About It Book."



When making a book like this one for your child be sure to do the following:

- Include pictures, logos, textures and souvenirs to send between home and school.
- Label events so they can be discussed at home and school.
- Let your child show the book as you talk about it.

This is an example of a sequence or daily calendar box. Included in the sections are: **waterwings** - representing swimming, **silverware** - representing lunch, a **piece of rug** - representing free time, and **bells** - representing music.



You need to use sign language with your child if he does not have enough hearing to understand spoken language. In the beginning, select signs that are easy to make, easy to understand, motivating, and useful. Sign language courses are available through some local education agencies, community colleges, and community centers. You can also become familiar with signs by using a sign language book designed like a dictionary. If your child is not able to see, help him learn to read signing tactilely by holding his hands over yours to feel the signs.

Suggested signs:

Up - Put out arms before picking your child up.

Eat (*hand to mouth*) - Make the sign before feeding.

Drink (*hand to mouth like holding a cup*) - Make the sign before giving a drink.

Bath (*both hands rub on chest*) - Make the sign before taking off clothes.

Tickle (*move fingers*) - Make the sign before doing it.

Cold (*shiver*) - Make the sign when appropriate.

Cry (*fingers on cheeks like tears*) - Make the sign when he is crying or is about to start.

Shirt (*pull on your shirt*) - Make the sign when changing clothes.

Play (*little finger and thumb extended, other fingers bent; wiggle hands*) - Make the sign when you are about to play or share a toy.

Bye Bye (*wave*) - Make sign when leaving or putting something away.

All Done (*both hands are palm up, then flip them sideways to palm down position*) - Make the sign when finished with an activity.

Signs should always be repeated during the actual activity. Remember how important repetition is to learning.



Riley loves to rock.



Rocking is stopped.



He gestures *more* to start rocking again.



Yeah! I started rocking again.

The signs your child makes may not look like the signs you see in books or the ones teachers make. Your child's signs will probably be exaggerated and quick. Being exact is not important--what *is* important is that she is communicating with you. As she gets older, she can learn to perfect her signs.



Janessa signs she "Wants



more" music.



Here she *wants* bubbles.

EATING

Introducing Solid Foods to Your Infant

Introducing solid foods can be a difficult task with any infant, but it is especially difficult for the child with deaf-blindness. Unless there is a physical reason which prevents it (consult your physician), gradually introduce solid foods to your baby as near the normal weaning time as possible. As your child gets older he will become more comfortable with different food textures and tastes.

First encourage your child to explore the spoon and the food. Before offering any food, touch his lips with your fingertips and say that it is time to eat. This is the sign for eat and states that something is going to happen that involves his mouth.



Matthew is told it is *time to eat*.



Mom shows him the cookie dough.



Mom gives him a taste.

Initially allow your child to smell the food. Offer one spoonful of food before his liquid feeding. Touch his lips with the spoon, then place it in his mouth. Continue to touch his lips with the spoon several times to encourage him to swallow the food. Continue with one food until he has gotten used to and accepts it. At this stage it is more important that he gets used to the new experience of eating solid food than the number of bites he takes.

When your child will take one spoonful without fussing, start to increase the number of spoonfuls. You can then introduce a variety of different flavors and textures of foods. Remember to do this gradually. **Never** force this process. Your child will learn to eat solid foods if you are gentle but persistent and if he is able to explore a variety of foods.



Riley helps mom unwrap a candy bar.



He asks if he can eat it.



He shares a bite with mom.

When possible you may want your child to assist you, or at least be in the kitchen, when you are preparing food. Mealtimes are wonderful motivating times for stimulating all of your child's senses. This is the best time to teach texture, size, and shape of different foods. How will he recognize a fruit, for example, if you only offer small pieces of it? If he likes oranges, let him feel the whole orange, peel it, help slice it, put it in a bowl, and eat it. This will associate the sights, smells, and sounds of food being prepared with the process of eating, and also help teach where food comes from.

Take your child on outings to the grocery store. This is a great opportunity for sensory stimulation. He can touch rough and smooth fruits, hold heavy cans and light boxes, and feel the cold milk carton. In addition, there will be a wide variety of stimulating odors, colors, and sounds. As he gets older, your child will be able to recognize his favorite foods and make his own choices.

Suggested Table Foods

Begin with soft mashed foods such as the following:

- Mashed potatoes
- Well cooked mashed vegetables
- Soft diced fruits (bananas and peaches)
- Applesauce
- Yogurt

Beginning finger foods should dissolve in the mouth after two or three chews. Your child will enjoy sensory stimulation from food that has a "crunchy" quality, such as the following:

- Breadsticks
- Soda crackers
- Toast strips
- Dry cereal
- Cheese sticks
- Graham crackers

Some softer chewable foods include:

- Banana slices
- Soft, sliced, canned fruit
- Scrambled eggs

Liquids are easier to handle when cold or warm (not hot) and when thickened. Some suggested liquids are:

- Eggnog or Buttermilk
- Thinned yogurt
- Instant Breakfast added to milk
(provides additional calories and nutrition)
- Milkshakes
- Apricot nectar

Introducing a New Food to Your Child

Introduce one new food at a time. It is important for your child to explore and help you prepare the food. Fruits are great for this. For example, she can help peel a banana, slice it, put it in a bowl, and eat it. She can also find things in the cupboard, open packages, help mix, and taste them. Let your child touch, smell, pick up, drop, squish, lick, or explore the food in any way she wants to. This will likely get messy, so allow time during your schedule for play and clean up.

Most children love playing in the water. Your child may even want to help you with the dishes. All of these activities help teach about the world and how it works.



Krista helps mom in the kitchen
with the dishes.

Share the experience of eating with your child. Allow her to feed you. Then offer a bite of the food to her. Let her feed herself if she is able to. Repetition is a key to this process. Offer the food as many times as your child will tolerate it at each setting. If she has a favorite food, pair it with the new one, so the introduction of the new food is pleasant. Once again, do not force your child to eat.



Stephanie is learning how to eat with a spoon.



Breona has mastered the spoon.

When teaching your child to feed himself, keep in mind that spooning food out of a deep bowl is easier than from a flat plate. Bowls with a suction plate on the bottom are excellent. Introduce a spoon when he is ready to use one. Using a lightweight spoon will make it easier for your child to tell if there is food on the spoon or not. A short wide handled spoon offers him an easier grip using his whole fist. When teaching your child to scoop with a spoon, assist in getting food on the spoon. If the spoon keeps coming up empty he may think his plate is empty. Your child should learn to use his other hand to locate the food on his dish.

Foods that will stay on a spoon when scooped are:

- Applesauce
- Cooked cereal
- Pudding
- Cottage cheese
- Mashed potatoes
- Cheerios soaked in milk
- Macaroni and cheese
- Egg salad



Riley finds his cereal easily in his scoop dish.

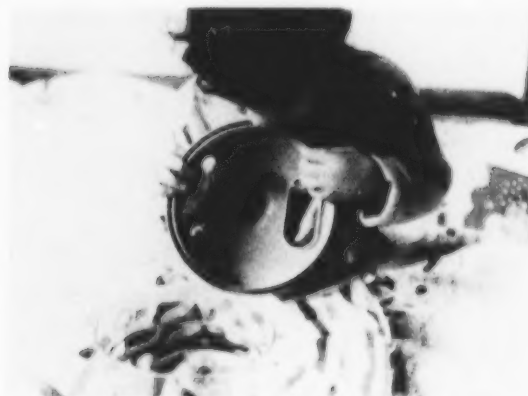
All of these processes will take time and practice, but be persistent. More importantly, be prepared and allow enough time to follow through. It is okay to take a day off; not every trip to the grocery store or mealtime has to be a learning experience. These times need to be enjoyable for *everyone* in your family.

PLAY

As an interpreter for your child, it is your task to teach new ways of exploring the world. The key to developing play skills is **repetition**. Children with deaf-blindness often will explore and interact with toys in a specific way. Some may pat all toys, some may use their heads to move them, and some may lick them or put them in their mouths. As with all children, they will have their favorite toys.



Millie uses her head to operate the toy.



Millie "checks out" the lid by licking it.

Choose toys for your child that are easy to move and have bright colors or high contrast and make sounds. Play with one or two toys at a time on a solid background. A bright red, blue, and yellow ball is more easily seen on a white towel. Also, blocks are great for turn-taking: you stack them up and your child knocks them down. (For toy suggestions see pages 26-27.)

Your child will be motivated to operate toys only if she is able to do so without help. This is a fun way for her to learn. In addition, it will provide her with the independence and confidence to continue exploring.



Krista helps stack the blocks.

Your child may prefer to play with everyday objects that are familiar, such as combs, cooking utensils, or laundry. This is great because these are some of the things she will need to learn how to use in order to gain her independence. Also, with these objects, it is impossible to fail, because there is no right or wrong way to use them.



Breona plays with dad and her pacifier.



What a great toy--dad and the mirror!

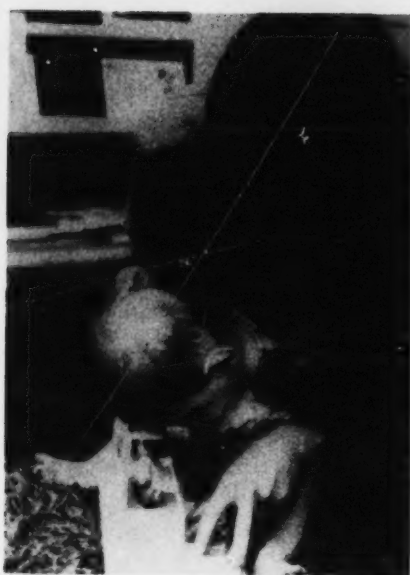


Millie plays with mom's strainer.



In order to let your child know it is playtime, you should always play in a specific room or on a special quilt or blanket. To introduce a toy to your child, demonstrate how it works. Do this a number of times first, and each time you present the toy to her in the future. Next, place the toy close to her and allow her to reach out and play with it on her own. For a totally blind child, place the toy so that it is touching a part of her body. At first your child may only pick up and drop the toy. This is a great way for her to explore. Wait about fifteen seconds and see if she reaches for it again. If she doesn't, give it back to her. If she will tolerate it, have her rest her hands on yours, while you operate the toy. Some children will let you manipulate their hands. Do this carefully.

Another method of encouraging your child to explore new toys is to use a favorite toy along with a new toy. The favorite toy can be placed in, on, or by the new toy, making it necessary for her to interact with the new toy in order to get the favorite toy. Stop if you see signs of withdrawal, which she will show by pulling away, clenching her fists, or crying.



Faleesha's teacher shows her how to work the toy.



Christina's sister and brother demonstrate toys for her.

Once your child accepts a new toy, change it and see if she notices the difference. For example, tie a scarf to the toy, put a rubber band around it, or get another toy just like it, only a different color and size. This will help create curiosity in your child.

Once your child has learned a new skill she may want to practice it. She may later lose interest and be ready to move on. At this point you can change or adapt the objects your child is using for play toys. You can do this by giving her lots of round things to roll, similar to a ball; providing her with a variety of rattles; and adding an extra puzzle piece to her favorite puzzle.



Janessa finds a variety of different kinds of balls in containers.



When your child is alone make sure his favorite play objects are within reach. As he becomes mobile provide him with a toy box so he knows where to find his toys. Keep the toy box in the same place at all times. This will teach him that things belong in a specific place and do not magically appear.

In the kitchen you may want to set aside a cupboard or drawer, where you keep utensils that are safe for your child to play with. This will also discourage him from emptying the cupboards.



When on his own, Riley finds his horse to ride on.



Millie pulls the toy to spin the pictures and feel the vibration.



John finds a variety of ways to play with his bus.

The very best play thing for your child is *you*. Children with deaf-blindness love fingerplays and movement. (An example of a fingerplay is "Itsy Bitsy Spider.") Your child will communicate through the rhythm, sights, and sounds of fingerplays. This will also help you build a trusting relationship with her. When introducing new things to her she may, at times, need to return to fingerplays and hugs. Let her do this. The world can be a chaotic and inconsistent place for a child with deaf-blindness.



Faleesha finds her favorite tambourine in her toy box at school.

It is critical for your child to interact with brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends! Remember, play should be fun for everyone.

SUGGESTED TOYS

Air Pressure Activity Center - Squeezing and releasing causes amazing things to happen on this busy box. (Battat, approximate cost \$25-\$30.)

Big Mouth Singers - This is basically a piano keyboard. Pressing a key causes one of the Muppet-like faces to open its mouth and make a bell sound. (Child Guidance, approximate cost \$15-\$20.)

Bristle Blocks - These are among the easiest construction toys because of their special design. Each plastic block is covered with stubby bristles which interlock with gentle pressure. (Playskool, approximate cost \$10-\$15.)

Busy Poppin Pals - Five Disney characters pop up from behind closed lids as a variety of switches are operated. (Gabriel, approximate cost \$10-\$15.)

Cone Puppets - The body of the puppet is pulled down into the cone by holding the stick with one hand and the cone with the other. The puppet can dance and be used to play peek-a-boo. (Battat, approximate cost \$5-\$10.)

Dancing Animals Music Box Mobile - This music box plays for ten minutes. The colorful animals and flowers can be detached so you can hang a variety of new things. (Fisher-Price, approximate cost \$5-\$10.)

Happy Apple - The Happy Apple has a mellow chime inside that rings as the apple tips and rights itself. (Fisher-Price, approximate cost \$5-\$10.)

Helicopter Rattle - This lightweight rattle has lots of different places to hold on to, making hand to hand transfer easy. Contrasting color parts of the helicopter move. (Discovery Toys, approximate cost \$5-\$10.)

Octopus Music Box - Brightly colored wooden balls are attached to the music box on tight strings. The balls and springs rotate as the music plays. Even a gentle or random hand motion will get the balls clacking together. (Kouvalias, approximate cost \$20-\$25.)

Push-n-Merry Go Round - The top handle pushes down to spin and ring bells inside a clear domed lid. (Tomy, approximate cost \$5-\$10.)

Red Rings - This red plastic rattle looks like a planet surrounded by rings with an orbiting satellite attached to the center with flexible plastic. The red rings are made of easily gripped plastic; it almost seems to stick onto a baby's hand. The mellow bell sound and random movement of the satellite make this an intriguing first rattle. (Johnson & Johnson, approximate cost \$5-\$10.)

Rota Rattle - As the rotating arms of this suction toy spin, the rings slide up and down. It makes a mellow rattling sound. (Ambi, approximate cost \$5-\$10.)

Slinky - This toy is terrific even for small babies. It is available in an array of bright colors. (James Industries, approximate cost \$1-\$5.)

Spin'n'Roll Rattles - Four see-through cylinders are mounted on the base of this unusual busy box. The inside of each cylinder is different, visually attractive, and makes a different sound. (Battat, approximate cost \$10-\$15.)

Turn and Learn Activity Center - The Lazy Susan bottom on this activity center makes it easy for even random movement to cause the toy to spin. Each of the four sides has a separate activity. (Fisher-Price, approximate cost \$10-\$15.)

SELF-CARE SKILLS

Some of the most important skills you will teach your child are self-care skills. These skills will provide him with independence. Once he masters a skill, let him do it on his own. He needs to discover that he can do things by and for himself. If you help him because he is taking a long time to complete a task, he will learn that if he stalls long enough you will do it for him.

Here are some strategies:

- Use common sense. Teach new skills when and where they happen.
- Try doing it yourself. Consider how you would do the task before trying to teach it.
- Be prepared. Make sure you have everything needed before you start.
- Be consistent. Use the same words, gestures, and steps.
- Work from behind. It is easier and more natural for your child to feel the movements when you are behind him.
- Give less and less help.

DRESSING

While your child is an infant you can prepare him for dressing by touching the body part that you are going to dress. He will soon learn to help you by lifting that body part and cooperating with dressing and undressing. Your child will first learn to undress himself; it is easier than dressing.

Before starting to teach your child dressing skills you will need to choose clothes that are easy for him to manage. Zippers, elastic waistbands, and velcro closings are easier to use than buttons and snaps. As your child becomes successful with easy fasteners choose clothing with buttons or snaps to challenge him.

Start teaching your child to dress himself when he is a toddler. Continue to signal him by touching the part of his body you are going to dress before putting on the clothes. Always show him what you want him to do. For example, if you want him to put his pants on:

- 1) Run your hand along his leg.
- 2) Have him repeat the gesture.
- 3) Have him pull his pants up his leg.

In order for your child to have a sense of accomplishment encourage him to do the last step of the process.

Once your child is able to put on a piece of clothing independently, teach him how to deal with small problems, such as a sleeve pulled inside out. Have your child help you get his clothes out of the closet and drawers so he knows where they come from. Put a tactile label (Stitch an "X", a small button, or a different fabric patch.) on the back of his clothing to show the difference between front and back. Help him develop the habit of feeling for this marker before putting on clothing. If he has enough vision, the label could be a colored one.



Joshua and mom pull his sock off.



Off it comes.



Mom shows Joshua his toes.



He helps pull his other sock.

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TOILET TRAINING

Toilet training is a long-term process. Before starting toilet training you will want to make sure your child is ready. Look for the following signs:

- She urinates at regular times every day and does not dribble all day long.
- She is able to hold urine or stay dry for 1 1/2 to 2 hours. (If she cannot do this she won't know the feeling of a full bladder which leads people to go to the bathroom.)

Your child must also be developmentally ready for toilet training, as shown by the following skills.

- She is able to get to the bathroom or shows that she needs to go.
- She has learned the basic dressing and undressing skills needed.
- She dislikes being wet or soiled.
- She will remain seated on the toilet for at least five minutes.

The above skills are necessary for your child to be independent in going to the bathroom. These skills will be taught during the toilet training process. Begin toilet training with your child when she shows the readiness signs. You will want to start by the age of five, even if the readiness signs are not yet there.

Toilet training involves the following skills: recognizing the full bladder feeling, finding the bathroom or indicating the need to go to the bathroom, pulling down pants, urinating or having a bowel movement in the toilet, wiping, pulling up pants, flushing the toilet, washing and drying hands, and leaving the bathroom.

To begin, keep a schedule of your child's toileting habits. If you know that she wakes up in the morning dry and is wet after breakfast, you need to put her on the toilet before breakfast. Never leave your child on the toilet for more than ten minutes. Toilet training should always be done in the bathroom so that your child knows the proper place to go.

In the beginning, put your child on the toilet frequently and praise her each time she uses it correctly. You may want to reward her with a special toy when she goes on the toilet. Also, have your child wear training pants. This is the only way she will feel uncomfortable when she is wet. Rubber pants, disposable diapers, and cloth diapers all keep a warm, comforting feeling close to the skin.

It is also important that your child feel secure. When she is on the toilet or potty chair make sure she is supported on both sides and that her feet can touch the floor. Stay with your child while she is on the toilet and praise her as soon as she goes. You can still expect occasional accidents. Remember to train her according to her schedule and give lots of praise.



Stephanie sits securely on the potty chair.



Riley's Dutch door lets his parents hear him when he's up at night, and keeps him safe.

BEDTIME

Bedtime can be difficult for a child with deaf-blindness. It will be helpful to have a clear routine each night. This routine should include calm and relaxing activities such as a warm bath, story, or quiet game. Your child may have a favorite toy or blanket that she takes to bed with her for security. If she wakes during the night try not to pick her up, instead soothe her while she's in her crib.

In order for your child to recognize sleep time she needs to be left in her crib. There will be those times though, that you will need to get her up to calm her. Always use a very bright light when putting her to bed or getting her up and use a faint light when checking on her at night. Also have your child sleep in her crib at night with a blanket wrapped firmly around her and then during nap time have her sleep somewhere else with a blanket placed lightly over her. This will help to create differences between night and day.

If your child climbs out of her crib or gets out of bed at night you may want to put her mattress on the floor for safety. If your child is frequently up at night you may want to install a Dutch door so that you can hear her and know she is safe.

MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Motor development and play are the same things to your child. When working on motor skills with your child you will be helping her learn how to move and coordinate movements. Encourage her to move while playing by explaining what is expected of her and prompting her to participate. Movement during play will improve motor achievements and assist the development of balance. Success in movement diminishes fear and gives your child the invaluable feeling of security. In an atmosphere of play and security your child will progress and become self-reliant.



Janessa's toys are always within reach when she is in her crib.

Your child may be slow to develop motor skills. This is because she does not have a visual reference for where her body is in space and she cannot use visual cues to help her. She also may be apprehensive about moving because she fears bumping into things. Until she has a mental image of an object it will be strange and new to her each time she experiences it.

You need to begin working on motor skills in infancy. Start by providing different experiences with movement activities. These occur in all parts of everyday life, and include:

- Holding and carrying her
- Changing her diapers
- Washing her
- Feeding her
- Playing with her

In the beginning you will need to work with your infant on relaxation. The young infant's body is tense, with arms and legs bent and fists clenched. You can help your child relax by frequently changing her position, stretching her arms and legs, and massaging her after changing her diapers.

Your child will learn to lift her head and strengthen her back and neck muscles when positioned on her stomach. While in this position, her hands are able to feel the ground. It may take her time to get used to this position and the different textures on her hands. Carry your child in both your right and left arms. Move her gently and enhance the smallest movement she makes. To encourage movement while playing, attach a mobile, musical toy, or brightly colored balls to the crib.

Allow your child time to change position, explore her body, and try movements on her own. Prepare your child for sitting, standing, and walking by strengthening her muscles, making her aware of her legs and feet, and by encouraging her to balance.

Set up a consistent time each day to do movement activities. A good time is after your child's bath. This way your child can expect to play at the same time each day. The following are some movement activities to try.

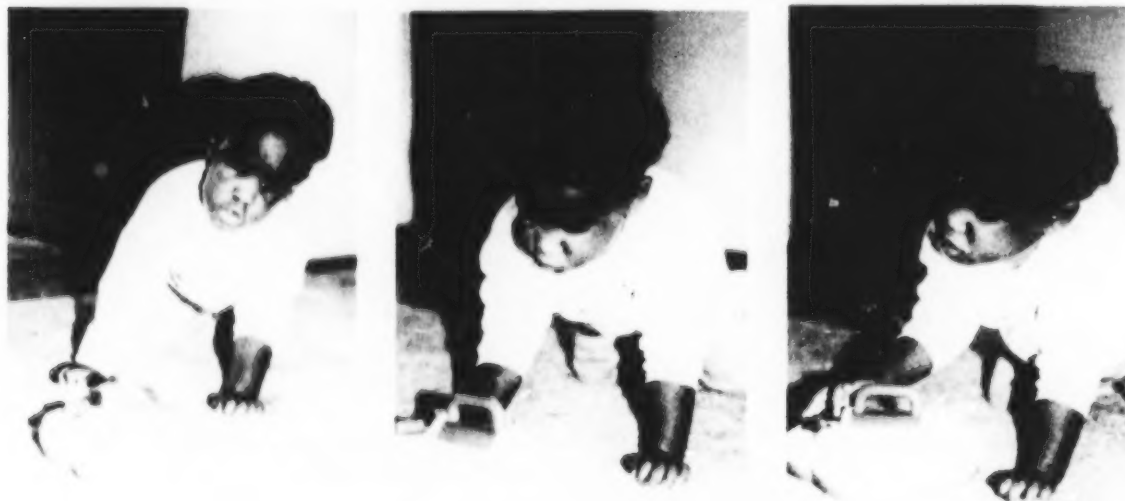
- Pat or massage her body.
- Open her hand. (Start at the shoulder, patting or massaging down to her hand.)
- Cross her arms while holding her forearms. This develops body awareness.
- Hold both her legs and gently bounce them while she is lying on her back. This relaxes her legs.
- Tickle or trace on her tummy. This strengthens her stomach muscles.
- Roll her from side to side. This teaches her how to roll over. Start by rolling her halfway over, supporting her at the hips, and letting her roll the rest of the way on her own.

Rolling

Work with your child on rolling over. Rolling from front to back is easier than back to front. Once she is able to roll on her own show her that she can do two or three rolls to get somewhere.

Sitting

As your child gains independence in movement you can begin working on additional motor skills. After she has gained head control start working on sitting up. Strengthen her balance for sitting up by having her straddle your hip and gently tip her from side to side. While doing this, let her gain her own balance. This can also be done with your child sitting on your lap or over your legs.



Christina will crawl to get her favorite toy.

Crawling

You need to get your child used to being on all fours for crawling. This can be done by laying her over a small roll or by positioning her with knees tucked under her body. Show your child how to support herself on her outstretched hands. Bring her to sit on her knees with her arms still supporting her body. Rock her gently from side to side in this position to increase her balancing ability and strengthen back muscles. With her stomach on the floor, show your child how to move one arm forward and then the other, followed with one leg and then the other. Your child will crawl only if you are in front of her or if there is something motivating to crawl towards. She may also roll or scoot to get around.

Standing and Walking

When your child is ready, have her put weight on her legs in the standing position. Support her at the hips or shoulders pushing down gently to help her become centered in the standing position, then have her stand at the couch between your legs to give her a sense of security. By allowing her to lean on the couch she will begin to move her feet. Encourage her to move sideways. In order for your child to take steps out into "space," she will need support in front of her. A wagon, hula hoop, or pole can be used for this.



Stephanie practices her balance by kneeling.



Breona is beginning to cruise around the furniture.

While your child is walking have him hold onto your fingers. When he gets tall enough have him hold onto your wrist. Now that he is walking he needs to get to know his house. Rather than leading him around, help him to "trail" the walls. While "trailing" he needs to keep one hand in contact with the wall or a piece of furniture. Walk with him, back and forth, around the furniture. Avoid open spaces as much as possible. Provide clear paths. When your child is first learning to walk don't move the furniture. Later, if the furniture is moved, be sure to show your child the new arrangement.



John is ready to start walking with help.



Using the wall, John can get down from standing.



Riley holds mom's wrist to move around the house.



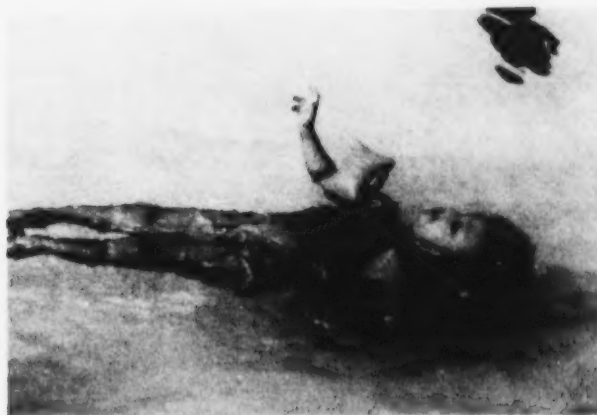
He knows he's at the stairs when he finds the gate.



He finds his high chair in the usual place.

Swimming

If your child enjoys water play, you might want to take her swimming. Many children learn new motor skills in the water due to the freedom of overcoming gravity. This is a great place to work on balance and walking.



Stephanie loves to swim!

GENERAL RESOURCE INFORMATION

HEARING AIDS AND GLASSES

Your child may have hearing aids or glasses prescribed for him. You will want him to wear his hearing aids and/or glasses as much as he will tolerate them. To prevent his aids from getting lost attach fishing line to each hearing aid and safety-pin it to the back of his shirt. To secure your child's glasses use an elastic holder so the glasses will drop down around his neck.

Your child may not tolerate his hearing aids when he has a cold or is teething. During these times the hearing aids may intensify the pain from fluid in his ears or from teething. Loud environmental sounds may also cause him to take off his hearing aids. At times there may be too much visual and auditory stimulation for your child. Let him be the judge. If he removes his glasses or hearing aids allow him to keep them off for a while. Put them on again when the environment is more calm.

In order to clean the ear molds, first remove them from the hearing aid, then soak them in warm soapy water, and clean the holes with a pipe cleaner.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Each state has available to its handicapped residents Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Contact your local Social Security office for information. Medical assistance should also be available through this office.

In some areas local service organizations are available to provide assistance with medical costs and equipment. Some that may be available in your area are: Easter Seals Society, Elks, Kiwanis, Lyons, Masons, Quota Club, and Shriners. Contact your local branch office for information.

In addition, check with your state deaf-blind agency (usually located in the state capitol city), state and local agencies serving the hearing and vision impaired, and your local education agency. Each of these should have resources available to you at no cost.

Information on children within the book:

Breona is nearly two years old, has low vision, and a moderate hearing loss. Her impairments were caused by static encephalopathy at birth.

Christina is nearly three years old, totally blind, and has a mild to moderate hearing loss. Her impairments were caused by a premature birth.

Faleesha is four years old, totally blind, and has a severe hearing loss. She was born with multiple congenital anomalies.

Janessa is one and a half years old, has a visual impairment, and a mild hearing loss. She was born with multiple congenital anomalies.

John is three years old, totally blind, and has a severe hearing loss. He was born with CHARGE Syndrome.

Joshua is two years old, has a cortical visual impairment, and a mild hearing loss. He also has cerebral palsy. His impairments were caused by static encephalopathy at birth.

Krista is four and a half years old, has a visual impairment, and a severe hearing loss. She was born with a chromosomal deletion syndrome.

Matthew is three years old, has low vision, and a severe hearing loss. He was born a dwarf.

Millie is two years old, has a visual impairment, and a severe hearing loss. Her impairments were caused by a premature birth.

Riley is five years old, totally blind, and has a moderate to severe hearing loss. His impairments were caused by a premature birth.

Stephanie is three years old, has a visual impairment, and a moderate to severe hearing loss. She was born with Infantile Refsum's syndrome.